

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 AMMAN 00857 150844Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 CU-02 /071 W
-----151013Z 044937 /14

R 131521Z FEB 77 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0549
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 0857

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS SOCI JO
SUBJ: WHITE COLLAR FERMENT IN JORDAN

1. SUMMARY. RECENT WEEK WITNESSED INCREASING DISCONTENT
IN DEMANDS FOR HIGHER SALARIES AND BENEFITS AMONG LARGE
SEGMENTS OF JORDANIAN SALARIED MIDDLE CLASS, MOST VOCAL
OF WHICH ARE SECONDARY-SCHOOL TEACHERS. THERE WAS A PUBLIC
CONFRONTATION IN IRBID BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PRIMIN
BADRAN. DISCONTENT COULD TAKE BROADER-BASED FORM OF
STRIKES. WHILE GOJ PURSUING STICK AND CARROT MEASURES WHICH
INVOLVE BOTH ARRESTING ALLEGED TROUBLE-MAKERS AND ATTEMPTING
TO MEET DEMANDS AT LEAST PART-WAY, RISING DECIBLE LEVEL
OF COMPLAINTS BY TEACHERS, GOVERNMENT-EMPLOYED DOCTORS
AND ENGINEERS, AND TAXI DRIVERS HAS CREATED SITUATION OF
MORE THAN USUAL CONCERN TO GOJ, ALTHOUGH QUEEN
ALIA'S DEATH HAS TENDED FOR THE MOMENT TO DIVERT
PUBLIC ATTENTION FROM ISSUE. END SUMMARY.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 AMMAN 00857 150844Z

2. DISCONTENT IS CENTERED IN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
TRADITIONALLY ONE OF LEAST EFFECTIVE OF JORDANIAN
PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS. LOW SALARIES, HARDSHIPS INVOLVED
IN ASSIGNMENT TO RURAL AREAS, AND CORRUPTION ON PART OF
HIGH MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE SAPPED ENERGY AND MORALE
OF TEACHER CORPS TO POINT THAT IN MID-1976, PRIMIN'S

OFFICE ANNOUNCED THAT ADVANTAGEOUS SALARY ALLOWANCES WOULD BE GIVEN TEACHERS. TWO EVENTS PLUS CONTINUING INFLATIONARY PRESSURES SUBSEQUENTLY ANGERED TEACHERS: (1. MINISTER OF FINANCE COMMENTED DURING NOVEMBER TV TALK SHOW THAT HE FOUND TEACHERS' COMPLAINTS UNJUSTIFIED AND THEIR ATTITUDE IRRITATING, AND 2. GOJ AGREED IN JANUARY TO ACROSS-THE-BOARD CIVIL SERVICE ALLOWANCES EQUAL TO THOSE PROMISED TO TEACHERS, WHO COMPRISE 17,000 OF 33,000 CIVIL SERVICE.

3. LATTER DEVELOPMENT SPARKED PLANS FOR STRIKE BY TEACHERS IN IRBID, SCHEDULED FOR FEB 12. IN ORDER TO CALM SITUATION THERE PRIMIN BADRAN ANC CHIEF OF ROYAL DIWAN 'ABD AL-HAMID SHARAF TRAVELED TO IRBID FEB 5 UNDER PRETEXT OF VISITING NEW YARMOUK UNIV. UPON ARRIVAL, BADRAN AND SHARAF FACED ANGRY CROWD OF TEACHERS, SOME OF WHOM PUBLICLY ADMITTED ENCOURAGING STRIKE AND STATED THAT THEY HAD ASKED STUDENTS TO DEMONSTRATE IN FAVOR OF TEACHERS. FEMALE TEACHERS WERE PARTUCULARLY VOCAL, CRITICIZING BADRAN'S APPARENT IGNORANCE OF THEIR ECONOMIC TRAVAILS, WHICH INCLUDE POSTPONED MARRIAGES. BADRAN DID NOT SUCCEED IN DEFUSING SITUATION, AND GOVERNMENT SUBSEQUENTLY ARRESTED SIGNIFICAN NUMBER OF TEACHERS.

4. THREAT OF TEACHERS STRIKE HAS BEEN DEFUSED BOTH BY ARRESTS AND BY BELATED REALIZATION ON PART OF GOJ THAT SITUATION HAS BECOME SERIOUS ENOUGH TO WARRANT EXTRAORDINARY SALARY INCREASES FOR TEACHERS. NEW CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 AMMAN 00857 150844Z

MIN OF EDUCATION DR (MD) 'ABD AS-SALAM AL-MAJALI MANAGED TO SPREAD WORD INFORMALLY THAT SPECIAL ATTENTION WOULD BE GIVEN TO TEACHERS' DEMANDS, ALTHOUGH UNTIL NOW NO OFFICIAL ACTION ON MATTER HAS BEEN TAKEN. SUDDEN DEATH IN AIR CRASH OF QUEEN ALIA ALSO DIVERTED FOR MOMENT PUBLIC ATTENTION FROM SALARY ISSUE. THREAT OF STRIKE COULD SURFACE QUICKLY IN FUTURE, HOWEVER, IF SALARY INCREASES ARE NOT ANNOUNCED.

5. TEACHERS' COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN ECHOED BY DOCTORS AND ENGINEERS ON GOJ PAYROLL. SOME 60 GOVERNMENT PHYSICIANS HAVE TRIED TO RESIGN, COMPLAINING THAT NEW CIVIL SERVICE ALLOWANCE STRUCTURE IS BASED ON LONGEVITY RATHER THAN ON QUALITY OF TRAINING. FOR EXAMPLE, NEW YOUNG SPECIALISTS, HOWEVER WELL TRAINED, GET LESS PAY THAN LONG-TENURED NON-SPECIALISTS. MINISTRY OF HEALTH OFFICIALS HAVE RESPONDED IN PRESS TO SUCH COMPLAINTS BY REMARKING THAT ANY UNHAPPY JORDANIAN DOCTORS CAN ALWAYS BE REPLACED BY PAKISTANI IMMIGRANT PHYSICIANS.

6. WHILE SUCH THREATS MAY SERVE TO QUIET DOCTORS,
RISING DISCONTENT AMONG TAXI DRIVERS MAY PROVE LESS TRACTABLE.
TAXI DRIVERS MAY PROVE LESS
TRACTABLE. TAXI DRIVERS HAVE THREATENED TO STRIKE OVER
NEW GOVERNMENT DECREE WHICH STATES THAT HENCEFORTH,
CAB LICENSES WILL BE SOLD FOR JD 200 (US\$600). GOING
RATE HAD BEEN JD 1600 (US\$4800). POOR FAMILIES WHICH
HAD INVESTED FUNDS TO BUY LICENSES IN ORDER TO RENT
THEM OUT ON MONTHLY BASIS TO TAXI DRIVERS AS WAY OF
ASSURING GUARANTEED INCOME HAVE SUDDENTLY DISCOVERED
THAT GOVERNMENT HAS WIPED OUT VALUE OF THIS INVESTMENT
AT ONE STROKE.

7. IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT HOW TAXI DRIVERS'
COMPLAINT WILL BE RESOLVED. CLEARLY, HOWEVER, ECONOMIC
PRESSURES REPORTED PREVIOUSLY BY EMB ARE AFFECTING
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 AMMAN 00857 150844Z

MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASSES WHO INCLINED TO RESPOND WITH
POLITICAL ACTION. SOME LONG-TIME OBSERVERS OF JORDANIAN
DOMESTIC SCENE, INCLUDING FORMER PRINCE ZAYD RIFAI, NOTE
PRIVATELY THAT TIME HAS COME FOR KING TO TAKE DECISIVE
ACTION TO CORRECT SITUATION BY FORMING NEW
GOVERNMENT WHOSE SERVICE AND DEVELOPMENT MINISTRIES
WILL BE RUN BY TECHNOCRATS RATHER THAN BY CRONIES.
(RIFAI GOES SO FAR AS TO STATE THAT HE BELIEVES
KING HAS ALREADY DECIDED TO REPLACE BADRAN GOVT
AND TO PREDICT THAT KING WILL DO SO WITHIN TWO MONTHS. WE
WOULD BE MORE CAUTIOUS IN OUR OWN PREDICTIONS,
IN SPITE OF THE EVIDENT DISCONTENT.) BADRAN HAS THUS
FAR PROVEN ADEPT (BUT SLOW) AT IMPROVISING STOPGAP
MEASURES DESIGNED TO NEUTRALIZE PUBLIC DISCONTENT.
PASSIVITY OF JORDANIAN PUBLIC, COMBINED WITH DEMONSTRATED
WILLINGNESS OF GOJ TO TAKE STRONG MEASURES AGAINST
DISSENT AND HINTS OF SOME PAY INCREASE IN OFFICNG,
SUGGEST THAT HE CAN CONTINUE TO CONTROL SITUATION.
HOWEVER, WE EXPECT TO SEE CONTINUING PRESSURES AGAINST
GOJ FOR WAGE INCREASES IN COMING PERIOD.
PICKERING

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977AMMAN00857
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770053-0386
Format: TEL
From: AMMAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770246/aaaabosb.tel
Line Count: 160
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 880a6ec7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3334159
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WHITE COLLAR FERMENT IN JORDAN
TAGS: PINS, SOCI, JO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/880a6ec7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009